

The signing of this Constitution signals the end of four months of careful thought and deliberation by 142 men and women representing the people of Maryland. As the Convention closes and the Constitution is signed, the State of Maryland moves closer to its goal of a more effective and responsible government to serve her citizens.

Today's ceremony, however, represents more than the culmination of this Convention's work. The signing of this document is the most significant step yet made in a series of steps toward a new Constitution for Maryland. I am pleased indeed that as Governor of this State, in June of 1965, I had the foresight to appoint a non-partisan study commission whose duty it was, as stated, "to conduct an inquiry into the necessity for, and extent and nature of, any amendment, modification or revision of the Constitution of Maryland, with particular respect to whether a Constitutional Convention should be held, the procedures for calling such a Convention, the basis for representation at the Convention and the procedures for the election of delegates thereto."

As I have previously said, I am pleased to have played a part in the establishment of the Commission, and may I add that I consider the acceptance of the Chairmanship of that Commission by the distinguished Baltimore lawyer, Mr. H. Vernon Eney, to have been the greatest of good fortunes.

The Commission which he headed was non-partisan and represented the varying shades of interests in our State. Its final report speaks for itself, and I need not elaborate further on it here; but I do want to say that we were indeed fortunate that eleven of the members of the original study Commission were elected delegates to this Convention, including our President.

The opportunity to work with Mr. Eney during the past few years has been a most rewarding experience and one I shall always remember.

We all regret, I know, that former Governor William Preston Lane, the Honorary Chairman of the Commission, did not live to see the final product of its labors. Governor Lane was a loyal and faithful member of the Commission and contributed greatly to its deliberations.

We are grateful also to Governor Agnew and to the Maryland General Assembly for the support and the encouragement they have given this Convention.

In addition to the satisfaction of watching the progress toward the calling of this Convention and the privilege of assisting with the steps that led here, I have had the honor to participate in the framing of this new Constitution as a delegate. I have seen the dedication, the determination and the wisdom which the delegates have applied to the task. I have been conscious of the wide breadth of experience and the depth of knowledge that these men and women, representing a cross-section of Maryland's citizenry, have contributed to this assembly. I have witnessed and engaged in the long hours of study and debate devoted to the drafting of this document.

Needless to say, I owe a debt of undying gratitude to all of you for naming me Honorary President of this body; and let me hasten to say here that at no time during the period of planning for this Convention did the slightest thought occur to me to permit my name to be filed as a candidate from my County of Somerset. Suffice it to say that I am greatly pleased and honored that it did happen as I have enjoyed immensely the fellowship of this delightful group of ladies and gentlemen. It has been a great privilege.

When I came here last September, I decided that I would not take the floor at any time on any subject. I assure you, however, that this in no way reflected a lack of interest in the many provocative, challenging and stimulating proposals we have faced during these sessions. On the contrary, my interest in every proposal has been deep and abiding, and let me say that I have been sorely tempted from time to time to enter into the discussions, particularly on occasions when the outlook on some proposals which I considered to be of special importance appeared to be in deep trouble. But in the end, I stuck by my original plan feeling, as I did, that my role in creating this Convention and my activity here might in some way be interpreted as being in conflict.

I would suppose that I have probably spent more time in the political arena than anyone else here—more than thirty-six years. I can think of no greater good fortune, as I reach these twilight years of my life, than to have been able to come here, as I have, and climax this career in public life in an endeavor such as this in which we have attempted to forge a basic law that will serve Marylanders of this generation and of many, many generations to come.